

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 75  
By Hood

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Boots Donnelly on being chosen as the 2005 honoree of the Rutherford County American Heart Association Gala.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should salute those citizens who, through their extraordinary efforts, have distinguished themselves as community and professional leaders of whom we can all be proud; and

WHEREAS, one such noteworthy person is Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) coaching legend Boots Donnelly, who has been chosen as the 2005 honoree of the Rutherford County American Heart Association Gala; and

WHEREAS, the purpose of the annual Rutherford County American Heart Association Gala is to educate the public, raise awareness, and raise funds in the fight against cardiovascular disease; honorees must be individuals who are survivors of cardiovascular disease, well-known in the local community, and are interested in helping educate and raise awareness about heart disease; and

WHEREAS, Coach Boots Donnelly has inspired many fans, players, and colleagues and has established an unmatched legacy throughout his commendable career in athletics; he played collegiate football at MTSU; served a meritorious twenty years as the school's head football coach from 1979 to 1999; acted in an administrative role as the Athletic Department's Director of Community Relations for two years; and then served as MTSU's Athletic Director for four years; and

WHEREAS, a survivor of a heart attack in March 2004 at the age of sixty-two, Coach Donnelly had been the epitome of health as a strong, vigorous man who had never missed a day of work due to illness; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Donnelly felt chest pains for a few months prior to his heart attack but was finally rushed to the emergency room by his wife one night when the chest pains could no longer be ignored; and

WHEREAS, thanks to the exceptionally attentive and talented staff of Middle Tennessee Medical Center (MTMC), Coach Donnelly was quickly diagnosed and transported to St. Thomas for quadruple bypass heart surgery; and

WHEREAS, because of Coach Donnelly's strong will and good health and the excellent staff at MTMC's exercise facility, his recovery time was quick. Three days after surgery, he was walking in his neighborhood and after two weeks, he was back at MTSU working half days; and

WHEREAS, Boots Donnelly hopes to save other lives from heart disease through his experience and gives sage advice on preventing a heart attack, saying that ". . . no matter how strong or healthy you might think you are, always listen to your body and take action. Don't assume it is nothing and will go away"; and

WHEREAS, in 1974, Coach Donnelly began his commendable coaching career at his alma mater, Nashville's Father Ryan High School, where he had been an outstanding all-around athlete and was selected the NIL's Player of the Year in 1960; he led the Ryan football team to a 21-1 record over two seasons, including a prefect 13-0 mark and the Tennessee class AAA title in 1974; and

WHEREAS, as a professionally motivated and exceptionally talented leader, Boots Donnelly has accomplished numerous things during his exemplary tenure with MTSU athletics. As the head football coach of the Blue Raiders, Mr. Donnelly amassed an overall record of 140-87-1, making him the eighth most successful coach in Division 1-AA history; and

WHEREAS, Coach Donnelly is a three-time OVC Coach of the Year honoree and has twice been named Regional Coach of the Year. He won the National Football Foundation "Contribution to Football" Award in 1989 and was named the Tennessee Sports Writers Association's Coach of the Year in 1988 and 1994; and

WHEREAS, during his coaching career at MTSU, Coach Donnelly won four OVC titles and finished in the national top twenty-five on ten occasions. This amazing record was capped by the Blue Raiders' seven 1-AA playoff appearances under his leadership; and

WHEREAS, after becoming Athletic Director, Boots Donnelly guided MTSU to two Vic Bubas Trophies, the Sun Belt Conference (SBC) All-Sports Award, distinguishing the Blue Raider Program as the only SBC football school to win the prestigious honor, and secured a 1.5 million dollar pledge to construct a Blue Raider Hall of Fame, which opened in July of 2004; and

WHEREAS, Coach Donnelly also successfully contracted for football games against Alabama and Tennessee that created combined revenue of one million dollars in 2002 and oversaw the renovation of the Alumni Gym; and

WHEREAS, a member of the Blue Raider Hall of Fame, Donnelly was inducted into the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame in 1997 and is renowned as one of the most recognized names in Middle Tennessee athletic history; and

WHEREAS, even with all his professional achievements, Boots Donnelly is most grateful for the love and companionship he shares with his wife, the former Carole Holzapfel, who is a counselor at Siegel Middle School, their three daughters, Ann Donnelly Wolfe, Helen Mary Marrone, and Lauren Bashean, and his four grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Boots Donnelly epitomizes the spirit and commitment that are characteristic of a true Tennessean; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly finds it appropriate to pause in its deliberations to acknowledge and applaud Boots Donnelly for his many contributions to the athletic programs at MTSU and to thank him for advancing public awareness of heart disease, making the State of Tennessee a healthier and more health conscious place to live; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend Coach Boots Donnelly on being chosen as the 2005 honoree of the Rutherford County American Heart Association Gala, saluting his meritorious service to MTSU and the State of Tennessee and extending to him our best wishes for every future success.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.